

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 6780

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, GR

SUBJECT: BICENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY IN GREECE

REF: ATHENS 6742 (DTG 061145Z JUL 76)

1. SUMMARY. AMERICA'S BICENTENNIAL WAS WIDELY HERALDED THROUGHOUT GREECE IN A GENERALLY FAVORABLE FASHION. THE WARM TONE OF THE GREETINGS FROM PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS AND PRESIDENT TSATSOS TO PRESIDENT FORD, AS WELL AS THE SPECIAL MESSAGE OF CONGRATULATIONS FROM THE PRIME MINISTER WHICH WAS PUBLISHED IN THE NEW YORK TIMES, SET THE GENERAL BACKGROUND MOOD. THIS WAS FORTIFIED BY THE IMPRESSIVE TURNOUT AT THE AMBASSADOR'S OFFICIAL RECEPTION, ATTENDANCE WHICH WAS LED BY THE PRIME MINISTER (THUS, BREAKING HIS PRECEDENT OF NOT HAVING GONE TO NATIONAL DAY AFFAIRS SINCE HIS RETURN TO OFFICE ALMOST TWO YEARS AGO) AND WHICH INCLUDED OPPOSITION LEADERS GEORGE MAVROS AND ELIAS ELIOU. THE MEDIA GAVE WIDE AND UNUSUALLY LAUDATORY COVERAGE TO EVENTS BOTH IN THE U.S. AND IN GREECE, AND EVEN THE RATHER ANTI-U.S. LEFTIST PRESS SHEATHED ITS PHOBIA SOMEWHAT DURING THIS ANNIVERSARY WEEKEND. END SUMMARY.

2. IN HIS MESSAGE TO THE NEW YORK TIMES, PRIME MINISTER
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CARAMANLIS WROTE THAT "THE POLICY OF MY GOVERNMENT IS TO

STRENGTHEN AND DEVELOP EVEN FURTHER U.S.-GREEK FRIENDSHIP, BECAUSE APART FROM SERVING THE INTERESTS OF MY COUNTRY, IT ALSO SERVES THOSE OF THE ENTIRE FREE WORLD." THE FULL TEXT OF THIS MESSAGE HAS BEEN SOUNDED REPETITIVELY THROUGHTOUT THE PAST FEW DAYS IN THE GREEK MEDIA AS HAVE BEEN THE PRIME MINISTER'S AND THE PRESIDENT'S WARM BICENTENNIAL GREETINGS TO PRESIDENT FORD. GIVING ADDED EMPHASIS, THE PRIME MINISTER BROKE WITH HIS PRACTICE OF NOT ATTENDING NATIONAL DAY RECEPTIONS BY MAKING A PERSONAL APPEARANCE AT THE AMBASSADOR'S OFFICIAL RECEPTION YESTERDAY (JULY 5). THE PRIME MINISTER LED AN IMPRESSIVE ARRAY OF GREEKS WHO WERE PRESENT AT THE RECEPTION, IMPRESSIVE NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF THE LARGE NUMBERS, BUT BECAUSE OF THE PROMINENCE OF MANY OFFICIAL AND NON-OFFICIAL FIGURES WHO CAME FROM ALL SECTORS OF GREEK SOCIETY. RUBBING ELBOWS WITH NUMEROUS GOVERNMENT MINISTERS WERE ALSO VIRTUALLY ALL OF GREECE'S TOP POLITICAL PERSONALITIES INCLUDING OPPOSITION LEADERS GOERGE MAVROS (UNION OF THE DEMOCRATIC CENTER) AND ELIAS ELIOU (UNITED DEMOCRATIC LEFT WHO FOR THE FIRST TIME TO OUR KNOWLEDGE ACCEPTED AN INVITATION FROM THE U.S. MISSION. THIS PATTERN WAS ALSO REPEATED AT THE CONSUL GENERAL'S RECEPTION IN THESSALONIKI WHERE MINISTER FOR NORTHER GREECE MARTIS ASSISTED IN THE CAKE-CUTTING CEREMONY. MEDIA TREATMENT OF THE OFFICIAL RECEPTION WAS GENERALLY POSITIVE. POINTEDLY, SOME NEWSPAPERS CARRIED PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE AMBASSADOR SHAKING HANDS NOT ONLY WITH THE PRIME MINISTER, BUT ALSO WITH OPPOSITION LEADERS MAVROS AND ELIOU.

3. THE MEDIA GAVE CONSIDERABLE COVERAGE TO BICENTENNIAL EVENTS BOTH IN GREECE AND THE U.S. ACROPOLIS ISSUED A SPECIAL EDITION ON THE BICENTENNIAL AND ITS SUNDAY EDITION FEATURED THE AMBASSADOR'S INTERVIEW (REFTEL). THERE WERE VARIOUS EDITORIALS PRAISING THE U.S. AND HER MANIFOLD CONTRIBUTIONS TO MANKIND. EVEN COMMUNIST AVGHI (KKE-INTERIOR) AND RIZOSPASTIC (KKE-EXTERIOR) FOUND WORDS TO HONOR AMERICANS (AS OPPOSED TO THE USG) ON THEIR 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE. MOREOVER, THE GREEK AUDIENCE WAS TREATED TO GLIMPSES OF AMERICA AND VARIOUS FORMS OF AMERICANA

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THROUGH PRESS, RADIO AND TV, INCLUDING USIS ASSISTED PROGRAMS.

4. THERE WERE ALSO MANY CELEBRATIONS OF DIFFERENT KINDS BY THE LARGE AMERICAN COMMUNITY RESIDENT IN GREECE. ALL THE MAJOR HELLENIC-AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS SPONSORED EVENTS OF ONE KIND OR ANOTHER. THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY CHURCH HAD AN INTERDENOMINATIONAL SERVICE AT WHICH

THE AMBASSADOR READ APPROPRIATE EXCERPTS FROM THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND THE PRESIDENT'S BICENTENNIAL MESSAGE. CUSTOMARY FOURTH OF JULY SOCIAL AND ATHLETIC EVENTS WITH PRIZES WERE ALSO SPONSORED BY THE AMERICAN CLUB AND BY THE PRINCIPAL U.S. MILITARY INSTALLATIONS IN GREECE, ESPECIALLY NEA MAKRI AND HELLENIKON, WHERE APPROXIMATELY 4,000 AMERICANS, INCLUDING SEVERAL HUNDRED VISITORS, TOOK PART IN A DAY-LONG BICENTENNIAL FESTIVAL OF EVENTS. THE HELLENIC AMERICAN UNION IS CONTINUING WITH ITS SERIES OF BICENTENNIAL EVENTS.

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